



# STUDIES

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## RACE, EDUCATION, AND MORTALITY IN NORTH CAROLINA

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### ABSTRACT

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Higher mortality among blacks in the United States and among persons of lower socioeconomic status have been well documented. There has been less research on the interaction of race and socioeconomic status with regard to mortality. The present study addresses this issue. The major objective is to determine if racial differences in mortality remain after controlling for socioeconomic status, as measured by education. Death certificate data for 1989-91 were combined with 1990 census data on population to compute age-adjusted mortality rates by race-sex group and educational level for persons age 25 and over.

It was found that blacks had substantially higher age-adjusted mortality at every level of education. Significant mortality differences by education were observed in each race-sex group. The largest mortality differences between racial groups and between higher and lower educational groups were found at the youngest ages. The limitations of using education as an indicator of socioeconomic status are discussed.

A number of factors could be responsible for the racial differences in mortality that persist after controlling for education. These may include more limited health care access for blacks, different income and occupational characteristics for blacks at the same educational level as whites, and racism and racial discrimination resulting in a variety of negative outcomes including increased stress and associated health problems.

